



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SCHOOL OF LAW

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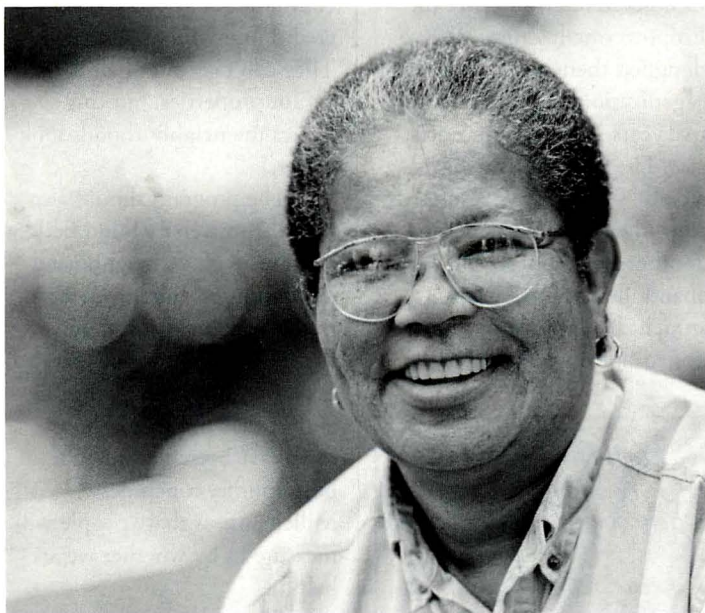
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND AT BALTIMORE

PRACTICING EZ LAW

Judie Schwartz

It's law that can lead to sustainable economic development and help revive America's cities. It's not "easy" law, but EZ law, the kind University of Maryland law students began practicing in Baltimore's Empowerment Zone this summer.

EZ refers to three locations—(1) a west Baltimore residential area adjacent to the University of Maryland at Baltimore, (2) an east Baltimore residential area surrounding the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions and (3) a southeast Baltimore industrial area. Together, they will be the beneficiaries of \$100 million in



Second-year student Olivia Cammack has worked with Professor Millemann on the Empowerment Zone project since February.

federal investment and \$250 million in business tax incentives over the next five years. Nearly 73,000 people live in these areas, which are among Baltimore's poorest. The unemployment rate stands at 17 percent. There is a significant stock of vacant housing.

Yet *empowerment* is the operative word in the Baltimore plan, and the law school will play a vital role by drafting the legal infrastructure that can help make these communities more self-sufficient. Clinic director Michael Millemann, the Jacob A.

France Professor of Public Interest Law, met with community leaders last year as part of the planning process for Empowerment Zone designation. He learned that they wanted legal help to incorporate "Village Centers," the hubs of the EZ project, so that they could take advantage of both public and private financial opportunities to improve their neighborhoods.

Beginning this summer, five second-year students worked with the Village Centers, preparing articles of incorporation, drafting bylaws

and assisting with applications for tax-exempt status. Olivia Cammack has worked on the project since February as a research assistant to Millemann and as a clinic student this summer. A Washington, D.C., native, she now lives near the university and not far from the Sandtown-Winchester area for which she has provided legal services.

"We're working primarily in the west Baltimore area, zone 1, and a little in zone 3," Cammack explains, and creating Village Centers is a key element in the plan for disbursing funds. She continues, "A partnership has to be formed by community groups, associations, institutions and the neighborhoods. That partnership becomes a Village Center. Organizations and neighborhoods will submit proposals to the board of the Village Center, which will review them and recommend to Empower Baltimore Management Corporation those they would like to have funded. Then EBMC will give the grant to the organization or neighborhood." Major priorities for funding are housing, public safety, family support activities, education and training, health.

Cammack called on significant organizational ability, computer background and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

FROM PAGE 1

community activist experience to help launch the community development clinic. A veteran of 28 years in the computer field, she owned her own consulting company before deciding to enter law school. "I wanted to do something different," she says wryly. "Having had somewhat negative experiences with attorneys, I decided it was time to learn some law and possibly help people who had similar experiences." She hopes to concentrate on legal malpractice, intellectual property and pro bono criminal defense.

Joining her this summer were Irma Robbins, who worked in Washington Village; John Jones and Jason McCullough, who teamed up in Poppleton; and Larry Toler, who concentrated on Harlem Park and Park Reister Little. All four are interested in practicing business law.

Working on the articles of incorporation has been a lengthy process, and understandably so, according to Millemann. "Several factors make it complex," he explains. "You're putting together a new organization made up of representatives of existing community organizations. And it's for a brand new purpose—to implement the Empowerment Zone grant. Groups are struggling with that," he notes, "to understand how the monies can be used."

Fortunately, the legal work should be effective long after EZ. The goal is for the Village Centers to continue after the Empowerment Zone. "We've designed them all as perpetual organizations, not limited to five years," Millemann notes.

The communities have already seen positive results from the students' work on another type of problem—abandoned houses. Each student had at least one abandoned housing case this

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summer, in which they have represented the neighborhood improvement association. The law authorizes courts to appoint a receiver to take over a vacant house when the owner has defaulted and is not being responsible. The receiver, in this case the neighborhood improvement association, then sells the house to a nonprofit development corporation, which renovates it and leases or sells it as low income housing.

The students' pride in their success is obvious. "It was our opportunity to go to district court and present our

case." "We've won all of them." "We're 7 for 7."

"It's one area where the community has been empowered. I know they feel that. They can't get rid of all the vacant properties, but this makes the neighborhoods look better."

The program should also help the university build better relations with its neighboring communities. Initially some residents seemed suspicious that the university would try to take over, but both Cammack and Millemann think those fears have been allayed. The bottom line, concludes Millemann, is that "people will measure us by whether we are helpful."

The community development clinic expands this fall, with 14 students signed up to work on EZ law. Professor Audrey McFarlane is on board to supervise the work. She comes with a background in both corporate and litigation work with Wilmer, Cutler & Pickering in Washington, D.C., plus pro bono involvement with the Lawyers Committee on Civil Rights, the New Columbia Land Trust and as editor of the *D.C. Children's Resource Manual*. McFarlane is a 1990 graduate of the Stanford Law School and served as a law clerk for Judge A. Leon Higginbotham Jr., former Chief Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, 3rd Circuit.

SCHOOL RECEIVES ABA PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

The University of Maryland School of Law was honored at the ABA's annual meeting with the "Outstanding Public Service Award." The School of Law was nominated by Maureen Ranney, third-year day student and member of the Maryland Chapter of the Law Student Division of the ABA. The six-page application highlighted the school's clinical programs, Maryland Public Interest Law Project and the public interest work of the Student Bar Association. Such recognition suggests that the school is doing a good job in achieving its strategic goals of "educating outstanding lawyers with a public calling" and providing *pro bono* services.

JD

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